

From his early days at TV Clot and BTV in the mid-1990s to his latest productions, such as his five-parter on punk in Spain, Kikol Grau (Barcelona, 1971) has developed a disquieting and irreverent imaginary that presents a kind of X-ray image of the history of television, politics and music from the 1980s to the present day, with a special emphasis on the alternative and independent audiovisual scene in Barcelona.

## Kikol Grau

# DAME PANK Y DIME TONTO



16.06 – 30.09.2018

[LA VIRREINA]  
CENTRE  
DE LA IMATGE

Ajuntament de  
Barcelona



*Dame pank y dime tonto* is the first survey exhibition on the career of the audio-visual maker Kikol Grau (Barcelona, 1971). It spans the period from his early days at TV Clot and BTV in the mid-1990s to his latest productions and presents a kind of X-ray image of the political, television and musical history of Spain, with a special emphasis on the context of Barcelona from the 1980s to the present day.

The exhibition is divided into three sections. The first of these features a series of shorts such as *Impenetreibol escroto* (1992), *K-fre! Desde Plutón con Amor!* (1994-1995), *The final fight IV* (1998), *Zool. Acto de purgar los caracoles* (2000), and *Docutrola: Cómo convertirse en un pirata de la televisión* (2001-2002); various audio-visual montages that Grau made in his early days, among them *Jason total massacre 1/2* (2008-2010), *Las hostias de Bourne* (2009) and *El señor de los gramillos* (2010); and lastly, a selection of experimental videoclips made for bands such as Tu Madre, Tarántula, Salvaje Montoya, Flamaradas, La Otra Gloria and Ktulu.

The second section covers his work for television, including iconic programmes such as *Por la Kara TV* (1994-1998), with Jorge Rodríguez, Pol Turrents and Juan Antonio Bayona; *Gabinete de crisis*, a weekly satirical show with Félix Pérez-Hita and Arturo Bastón, commissioned by Andrés Hispano, that ran from 2001 to 2007; *Si te he visto no te aguanto TV*, an internet television channel that broadcast independent and alternative programmes of cultural interest; programmes on music and film made for *Metrópolis* on TVE (2006-2012); *K-POW!* (2005), 13 short episodes on the world of comics made for the *Denominació d'Origen* series shown by broadcasters in the Network of Local Television Stations of Catalonia (2005); and *3 minutos para el fin del mundo* (2017), a mini-programme commissioned by Joan Pons for the O Estudio Creativo website.

The third section looks at Grau's filmography, from *Objetivo Gadafi* (2013) to his five-parter on punk in Spain, as well as *Las más macabras de las vidas* (2014), which explains Spain's Transition to democracy, as illustrated by the band Eskorbuto, *Inadaptados* (2015), about Cicatriz, and *No somos nada* (2016), about La Polla Records. *Magnicidios españoles y Poe* (2017) and *Moctezuma-Grau. Descendencia mortal* (2017) are also included in the exhibition. In addition, the films *Histeria de Catalunya*, a collective piece, and *Los demenciales chicos acelerados. Barcelona y alrededores* are being screened for the first time at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge. Coinciding with *Dame panky y dime tonto*, the Filmin platform will be presenting an extensive selection of work that Grau has made over the course of his career.

One of the significant aspects for understanding Grau's disturbing and irreverent imaginary is his drawings, which appear in posters, fanzines, scripts and preparatory notebooks and which constitute an episode in their own right in relation to his audio-visual projects. It is worth noting the importance in his iconographic universe of "the mad monkeys that are destroying Earth", as he himself describes them.

The exhibition is complemented by a considerable body of material from Grau's personal archive: posters, photographs, videotapes, vintage videogame machines, period record covers, comics that inspired him, etc.

## *The cheek of it* Andrés Hispano

I'll start at the end: What on Earth is Kikol doing here, exhibited, recognised, museumised?

### *Chapter two*

Kikol Grau is a dogged punk of the screen, a producer with a diary full of storylines to contaminate the centre of his periphery and the normal of *his normality*, without B. A *termite* author, a rotten tooth of good taste and contra-cultural—though sometimes cultural—leverage.

However, that audiovisual troll role is now too small for Kikol.

It isn't that he has lost his bite or aim, quite the contrary in fact. But after 20 years of putting his name to pieces in all sorts of formats, from music videos to documentaries, we now need to trounce the unidimensionality of his role as an *audiovisual troublemaker*.

In the years that have passed since his debut on local television, audiovisual media changed a lot. Until the year 2000 to set a boundary of sorts, his figure was that of the infiltrator, a squatter on television and a junior of documentaries; a meddler, an antibody and an exception. At that time and on those screens, his work represented a mouthful of bitter reality, crude, tangible, fun and irreverent. With Kikol and other pioneers of Gen X who acquired their qualifications in video clubs, gusts of *B to Z* subcultures swept across the screens; a world that repelled maturity, academia and moderation. They were hyperactive, nihilistic, outsiders and consumeristic.

Today, screens are full of these mouthfuls or rather bites of crude, subjective reality with no high/low cultural hierarchies or confines reserved for *gourmets* of things *exclusive*. Everything is there, from victims of intimacy to kittens and accidents. There is no longer a dark side of anything; everything is on display, even if it is muddled. There is no centre, no margins and no map.

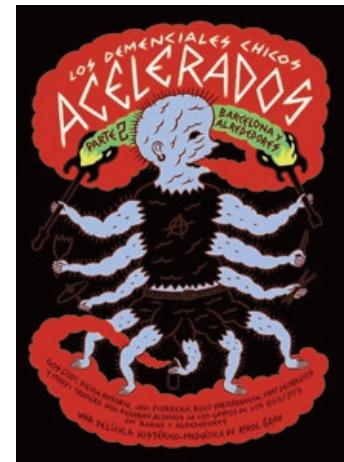
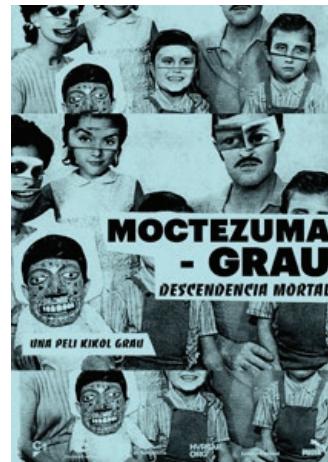
It is hard to be an outsider in this regime of hyper visibility.

Unless, perhaps, you remain faithful to your obsessions and your plan B is to insist on plan A. Kikol has creatively survived the devastation caused by the omnipresence of cameras and YouTubers.

More than that, Kikol has survived university, respectable companies and years of toil at the distributor Hamaca, being exposed to works by countless video artists. It is clear that the progressive, complex ambition of his projects owes something to that friction, but the work itself makes everything that cannot be fixed very clear, the work *specific* to Kikol: *inrockuptible*, resourceful and, in his own way, activist.

### *Chapter three*

I met Kikol at BTV, Barcelona's local television station led by Manuel Huerga between 1997 and 2003. The uniqueness of that project was its pioneering use of small digital cameras, its peculiar programming schedule and the formation of its team, which brought together people with some audiovisual media experience and others with none at all, like me. It was a true act of faith towards amateurs who had backgrounds in journalism, dance and art, or who were quite simply keen to cultivate their curiosity.



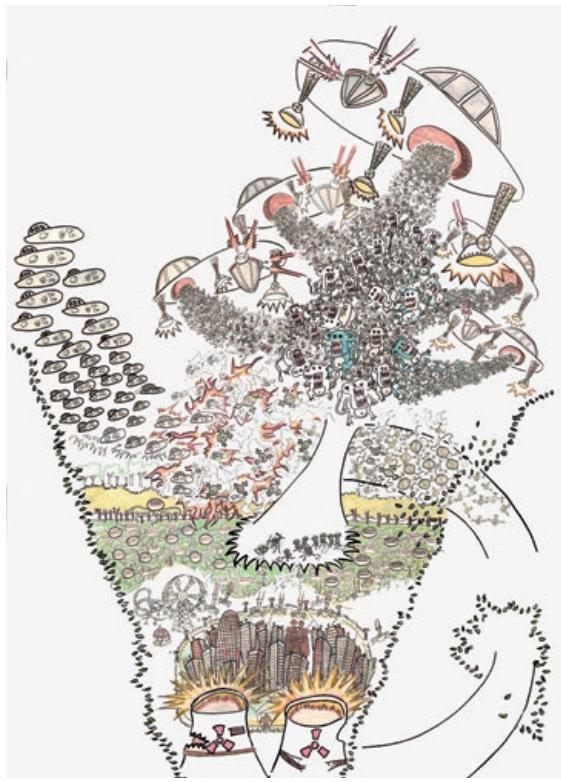
Poster for the film *Objetivo Gadafi* ('Objective Gaddafi'), designed by Aitor Guinea, 2013

Poster for the film *Las más macabras de las vidas* ('The Most Macabre of Lives'), designed by Miguel Hervás and Sergi Botella, 2014

Poster for the film *Moctezuma-Grau. Descendencia mortal* ('Moctezuma-Grau. Mortal Progeny'), designed by Arnau Estela, L'Anacrònica, 2017

Poster for the film *Los demenciales chicos acelerados. Parte 2. Barcelona y alrededores* ('The Hyper Crazy Lads. Part 2. Barcelona and Surrounding Areas'), designed by Paco Alcázar, 2018

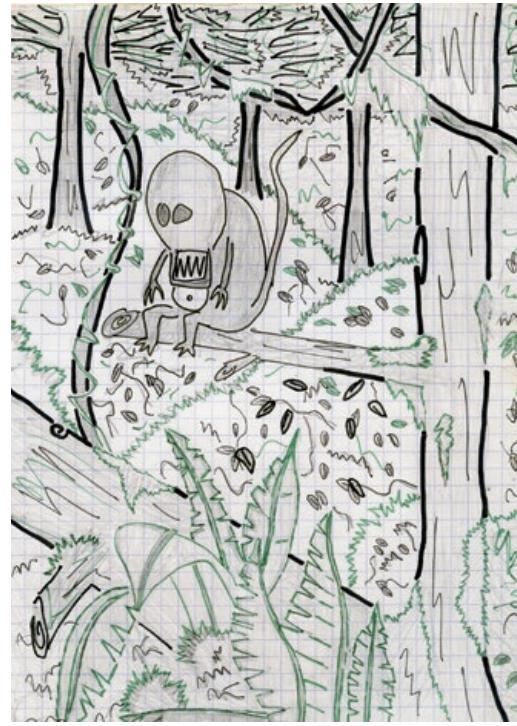
*Invasión total* ('Total Invasion'), Kikol Grau, 200?



*Putomonoloco* ('Fucking Crazy Monkey'), Kikol Grau, 200?



*Mono loco* ('Crazy Monkey'), Kikol Grau, 200?



*Mono árbol* ('Tree Monkey'), Kikol Grau, 200?



In the 1990s, television was still intimidating; it was practically impenetrable, a territory that had to be conquered because, what appeared and could be heard on it—its fauna, fashion and body language—were alien to our reality. Programmes like *Arsenal* (on TV3, 1985) or isolated projects in other countries such as *Paper Tiger Television* (NY, 1981) or *TV Party* (NY, 1978), which exposed us to that *weird* world that was ours, seemed mind-boggling to us. And, if a friend like Dani Miracle managed to wangle a television signal into the neighbourhood, the boldness of doing so seemed monumental.

Internet videos were practically non-existent at that time so, I repeat, television was still an interesting place to make one's mark on. The pretentious and optimistic among us spoke of *a possible television*.

Kikol came to BTV from Clot TV with Jorge Rodríguez, and all we knew was that they were part of a programme called *Por la Kara TV*, which acknowledged them as ferocious iconoclasts, although they almost certainly didn't know what that meant at the time. Kikol discovered, however, that his uninhibited insolence, sense of opportunity and ragged aesthetics were more than welcome on a medium that needed just that: access to everything and respect for nothing.

That was what was so cool about BTV and its infinite rotation of short documentary *capsules*; the promiscuous co-existence of visions, topics and treatments. This raw, that cooked.

Kikol served it raw.

The BTV adventure lasted for just over five years and, during that time, Kikol put his name to 85 pieces besides editing 70 more for other producers. Enough to polish some of the rough edges, but also to reassess

himself in others too: happenings and celebrities that talk to us about the *other chronicle* of our recent history, one that urgently needs to be saved from correctness and oblivion. There are now screens for everyone, but not everything or everyone appears on them.

#### *Fourth chapter*

I read somewhere that everything tends towards chaos. It sounds good, but I see it the other way round: everything tends towards uniformity, similarity and synchronicity like an army of metronomes. That is particularly serious in the cultural area, where the norm and its alternatives share pigeonholes in the FNAC store.

Audiovisual writing follows a similar course: the proliferation of image academies and schools produces a *School of Rock* effect, that is to say, a cultivated and mind-numbing convergence of topics and treatments.

Suddenly, that organic raggedness of Kikol's work becomes valuable as a statement, as the *truth* that can only be told in a hurry, as if it would rot if bound within good handwriting. In 1997, to me his work seemed like graffiti on the screen; I wasn't sure where art started and where vandalism ended. And that was good. Twenty years later, among so much 'observational' clonal material, everything that continues to be unruly in his work makes it more his own and more alive. Necessary, indeed.

As Pierre Bourdieu observed in relation to photography and the emergence of the amateur, people tend to unify codes, gestures and motifs. Where a revolution of uses and styles could have happened, just a handful of new conventions were agreed upon. Something similar is happening on the Internet.

There is just one gesture for taking a selfie, one perspective for portraying a breakfast dish and one place to put a camera in a car. And after entering thousands of adolescents' bedrooms the world over, it turns out that there is nothing particular to see; they are practically identical.

If everything is on display, why bother to look?

In a famous essay, Hito Steyerl defended the values of the *poor image*, and all of us perfectly understood that, possibly because he wrote about it well, but also because he wrote about it late on, when all of that was obvious to us. In times of plentiful and affected audiovisual production, maybe it is the right moment to stand up for *twisted lines* like those by Mekas or Korné who, due to their disregard for any norm, obtained memorable, simple and emotive images.

#### *Fifth subject*

I end up going back to the beginning, to the sense of bringing what shook the margins to the centre. Thirty years ago, Dick Hebdige warned us about the issue, of the high voracious appetite for the low and the consequences of that assimilation. Does a biker need museums to recognise the beauty of his or her leather jacket? Wasn't wearing that jacket a way of signifying opposition to a dominant culture that the museum exemplified? Well, that's where we are. The CCCB in Barcelona has already paid tribute to trash culture, the Guggenheim in New York has exhibited Harley-Davidsons and the MET has recreated the toilets of the CBGB, a skanky punk rock temple. Dylan has even accepted the Nobel Prize in literature.

In such operations, it isn't clear who is bestowing prestige on whom, or indeed if it's the other way round,

i.e., who is defeating whom. Whatever the case, they all end up being transformed.

The new perspective given by these spaces, be they museums or cultural centres, also compels the members of the public to reassess their preconceived ideas.

And that's good. If such questioning affects the creators of the medium itself, then it's even better.

I have no idea how Kikol will be transformed by his own exhibition.

In the meantime, his work is being offered to us like a knife piercing through a period, a fresh vision then and a necessary vision now.

New chapters will be coming soon.

**Curator: Valentín Roma**

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Palau de la Virreina  
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